

3 June 2013

Deputy Minister, Department of Arts & Culture

NYDA Executive Chairperson and Board Members

SAYC President,

Chairman of the June 16 Foundation,

Youth Formations

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentleman,

Good morning,

As we commemorate the sacrifices made by the youth of 1976 who were willing to lay down their lives in a fight against the apartheid government, our government recognises that the youth of today have a completely different struggle which is that of substance abuse over and above the fight for economic emancipation, access to quality education, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. It is therefore fitting to have the Youth Month theme for this year as: "Working Together for Youth Development and a Drug Free South Africa."

Government's decisive action to address substance abuse in Eldorado Park, Gauteng, brought the people in this area closer to the realisation of a drug-free community with the clamp down on drug dens known as "lolly pop lounges". Government notes and welcomes the progress made by the police, community leaders and other structures in Eldorado Park under the leadership of the Gauteng Provincial Government. Together they made significant progress in fighting the scourge of substance abuse. We are aware that the situation in Eldorado Park is symptomatic of issues facing many communities in the rest of the country. We are making a call on communities throughout the country to lead the fight for a "substance-free" South Africa within their respective areas. We therefore call on all segments of society to raise the profile of programmes to fight substance abuse.

Government will also be hosting a number of public participation sessions around the country during the Imbizo Focus Week that will be taking place from 11 -17 June 2013. The Izimbizo will also be focusing on the fight against substance abuse whereby various ministers will be visiting communities around the country. The Izimbizo will provide a great opportunity for communities and other entities to get involved and make their voices heard. During this month of June, let us recommit ourselves to fighting the war against substance abuse and alcoholism in all areas of the country.

The focus on youth development is still very much on the government's and NYDA's agenda. This year saw the signing of the Youth Employment accord. The Youth Employment Accord is a viable and meaningful approach to addressing the challenge of youth unemployment. It remains a better response than a silver bullet policy response such as a youth wage subsidy. We may be able to achieve more if all social partners commit to work together and have a single, coordinated approach to youth employment creation with a deliberate focus on skills development.

We also commend the various government departments and agencies that have done their best with the available resources to help develop the youth of South Africa. Great progress is being made across the country, for example:

- 606 unemployed graduates have been appointed by provincial government departments across the North West Province in internship programmes for them to gain much needed workplace experiential learning.
- 170 bursaries will be awarded to needy and deserving students to address the North West provincial priority skills needs. A total of R11,9 million has been budgeted for provincial bursary scheme for the 2013/14 financial year.
- The Department of Economic Development (EDD) made a commitment to support the growth of young entrepreneurs. The financial commitment was made as part of the Youth Employment Accord, totalling R3 billion over the next five years through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and Small Enterprise Finance Agency (Sefa) will go a long way in facilitating the growth and development of young entrepreneurs in South Africa. NYDA will serve as a conveyor belt for the screening and recommendation of young entrepreneurs to access the loan finance offered by the IDC and SEFA.
- Since inception, the NYDA has initiated several programmes, with a focus on entrepreneurship support, skills development, career guidance and information dissemination. Even with the budget constraints that the NYDA has faced, we have managed to create more than 28 000 jobs in the last three years, provided career guidance services to more than 1 million young people, provided over 110 bursaries and issued more than 33 000 loans to micro, small and medium enterprises.

The Presidency commends the work done by the NYDA over the past three years, and still makes the call to all social partners and all government departments to form strategic partnerships with the NYDA on reducing unemployment, because its only when everyone in our country puts together a concerted and common purpose that the lives of young people will be changed for the better, as we are all painfully aware that the danger of high unemployment of young people has a huge potential of destabilising a democratic government.

At the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Japan, the latest statistics revealed that almost three quarters of South Africans that are unemployed are younger than 34 years, and when President Zuma addressed the conference two days ago, he said that one his priorities before the end of his term of office in 2014 was to ensure that there is meaningful reduction in the country's high unemployment rate. He mentioned that youth unemployment featured prominently in the NDP, and the government has developed a number of sectoral strategies especially focusing on skills development.

A week ago I also attended the Southern African Development Community Region in Swaziland, where Ministers responsible for youth matters were meeting to address among others youth unemployment. On the sidelines of the conference a meeting was also held with Youth leadership from all sectors, that is political, business religion civil society and labour in which the youth identified and agreed on "The Big Five" issues that will determine the agenda of all youth formations henceforth, and these are;

- Economic Participation i.e. entrepreneurship and job creation
- Skills development, children must go to school and arm themselves with education because there is no substitute for education
- Professionalization of youth work
- Redetermination of the national youth service
- Fighting substance abuse and violence

If we are to deal with these challenges effectively, the society should be mobilised to partner with the youth in order to respond to these “BIG Five” issues.

Programme Director today as we launch the National Youth Month, we are also aware that June marks an important month in our democracy, as it is the month where we are reminded of the immense contribution made by the students of 1976, who marched against an unjust education system. This year as we commemorate the 37th anniversary of June 16, we cannot forget the sacrifices made by these young people towards liberating our country, I therefore urge our young people today to pay tribute and celebrate the heroism of the 1976 generation, and also continue the fight against substance abuse, inequality and seek to advance the economic development of young people against all odds.

Cabinet took a resolution that all National days should be coordinated by the Department of Arts and Culture, the mandate therefore of DAC is to develop the norms and standards on how we should commemorate or celebrate our National days, while that mandate is still pending to be presented to the nation, As government we are making a call to the nation that as we commemorate June 16, we should have a moment of silence and remember those hero and heroines who lay down their lives for their blood to nourish the tree of liberation, we make a plea to our youth to commemorate this day with the dignity it deserves and avoid celebrating by abusing alcohol and other substances, instead lets the youth celebrate the youth achievements while acknowledging the challenges that are still there in our societies.

I thank you.

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Speeches:

Minister's speeches

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